Please replace the Abstract with the following amended Abstract:

A switching device for telecommunication networks, which
comprises a) a number of I/O ports, arranged by groups in I/O
cards, for inputting incoming data streams and outputting
outgoing data streams of arbitrary protocols, b) a switching
fabric SF for handling internal data streams, c) a number of
adaptation functional blocks AFBs associated with the switching
fabric SF and forming a common pool of AFBs. Each AFB is capable
of performing at least one of the following adaptation functions:
- converting one or more of the incoming data streams or portions
thereof into one or more internal data streams, and
- converting one or more of the internal data streams handled by
the SF into one or more outgoing data streams or portions
thereof. The switching device also comprises a distribution
block DB for adapted to allow switching between the I/O ports and
the adaptation functional blocks AFBs, and so configurable to
provide a required connection between any of the I/O ports
positioned on any of the I/O cards, and any of the adaptation
functional blocks AFBs from the common pool of AFBs.